

better strategy would be to offer broad reconciliation—lifting economic sanctions, beginning negotiations for entry into the World Trade Organization, and restoring diplomatic relations—in exchange for more responsible regime behavior on nuclear enrichment, Iraq, terrorism, and domestic human rights. An American embassy in Tehran and a growing array of exchange programs with Iranian society would offer much better conditions for the United States to encourage and support the ongoing struggle of the Iranian people for freedom and democracy.

Throughout the Middle East, there is a growing recognition that authoritarianism has failed and that freedom is a necessary ultimate condition for peace and progress. Political freedom will not be achieved quickly—and certainly not by American imposition. But as we disengage from Iraq, we must find ways—less pretentious, unilateral, and impulsive—to renew the freedom agenda if we are going to serve our long-term security interests in the region. ▀

Strengthen Regional Cooperation

Charles Kupchan

The U.S. invasion of Iraq has stirred up sectarian tensions well beyond Iraq's borders and destroyed the regional balance of power that had existed between a theocratic, Shia-led Iran and the secular, Sunni-led regime of Saddam Hussein. As the United States extracts itself from a mess of its own making, the key challenge facing Washington is to stand up regional sources of stability as U.S. forces stand down. To attain this objective, the United States must devolve more strategic responsibility to local actors while it simultaneously seeks to catalyze regional integration as a foundation for stability. Ideally, regional integration and cooperation, not the balance of power or democratization, should become the focus of American strategy. Assuming that Iraq's internal troubles will for the foreseeable future prevent Baghdad's return to adventurism, Iranian ambition will remain the primary impediment to such pan-regional cooperation. Washington should therefore put a premium on engaging Tehran, seeking to transform it from a regional threat into a net contributor to security. As in Europe, South America, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere, rapprochement between traditional rivals, regional integration, and the development of a cooperative security architecture offer the best hope for a lasting stability in the Persian Gulf.

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The kernel for this regional security framework already exists: the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which was founded in 1981 by Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It is true that the GCC has not lived up to its own initial expectations; instead of pursuing multilateral cooperation with one another, its members have been investing in bilateral security ties to the United States. It is also the case that the GCC excludes the Gulf's two dominant powers—Iran and Iraq. But just as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a body that includes neither China nor Japan, has gradually evolved into a forum for a broader regional dialogue, so too can the GCC serve as the foundation for a more inclusive security order in the Gulf.

The GCC got off to a quick start in 1981. A revolutionary Iran, the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, and the mounting domestic threat posed by extremist violence compelled its six members to band together. The war also provided the GCC a compelling rationale for excluding the two dominant powers of the Gulf, whose hegemonic ambitions had previously hindered regional cooperation.

GCC members cooperated closely on border control and intelligence and established a joint military force called Peninsula Shield, as well as the beginnings of an integrated air defense network. The organization also advanced an extensive agenda of economic and societal integration. Following the GCC's first joint military exercise in 1983, Sultan Qabus of Oman said, "Now that the six Gulf countries have organized themselves in the Gulf Cooperation Council, the chances of a stable Gulf are better than at any time before. We are thinking together; we are talking together; we are planning together; and we are seeing things together instead of individually."

Although the GCC has continued to mature on the economic and political fronts—a common currency is under consideration—security cooperation has not kept pace. Indeed, during the past two decades, security ties among GCC states have loosened, with members looking to the United States rather than to each other to meet their security needs. Even though the United States withdrew most of its forces from Saudi Arabia in 2003, it has dramatically expanded its military links with Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the UAE. Since such dependence on U.S. power has come at the expense of regional integration, the GCC hardly seems prepared to serve as a primary vehicle for helping build a more integrated and stable Gulf.

But the strategic environment in the Gulf is poised to change dramatically as the United States withdraws from Iraq. For starters, Iraq is no longer an expansionist threat to the Arabian Peninsula; thus for the first time, the GCC may well be able to work with Iraq, rather than against it. Moreover, with Iraq's Shia majority likely to be in control once the dust settles in Baghdad, Iraq and

Iran are poised to put their destructive rivalry behind them, and GCC states will no longer be forced to choose sides. Just as reconciliation between France and Germany, Brazil and Argentina, and Indonesia and Malaysia was key to the onset of the European Economic Community, Mercosur, and ASEAN, respectively, so should reconciliation between Iraq and Iran clear the way for regional integration in the Gulf.

To be sure, the GCC is dominated by conservative Sunni regimes, making them awkward partners for the Shia-led governments in Iraq and Iran. But the GCC can turn this potential obstacle into an advantage. GCC cooperation with Tehran and Baghdad can help repair the sectarian divide that risks deepening throughout the Middle East. It can also placate the restive Shia populations that reside within the GCC's borders. The GCC likewise provides a useful vehicle for encouraging greater Saudi engagement in shaping the regional security environment. Whereas the smaller Gulf sheikdoms have often feared Saudi domination, the GCC provides a multilateral forum in which Saudi leadership can be more tactfully and consensually exercised. In addition, GCC members are capitalizing on energy revenues to diversify their economies and build modern education systems, offering a promising regional model for preserving stability while moving incrementally toward pluralism.

Of course, a truculent Iran poses a potent obstacle to developing a cooperative security order for the Gulf. If the regime in Tehran continues its belligerent rhetoric and proceeds with its nuclear program, the GCC would have to focus on collective defense against Iran instead of focusing on the collective security of the region. Rather than rebuilding intra-regional security ties and exporting multilateralism to Iraq and Iran, GCC members would continue to invest in their bilateral ties to the United States in order to counter the Iranian threat—as made clear by the Bush Administration's announcement of new arms sales to the region. In addition, a revisionist Iran would continue to inflame Shia-Sunni tensions, making it difficult for the GCC to reach across the sectarian divide.

This prospect provides good reason for the United States to bring Iran to heel, not by bombing it, but by pursuing a cautious strategy of normalization that ultimately undermines its hardliners and guides Iran back to the regional fold. Deft U.S. diplomacy can help weaken a regime that already appears to be losing its popularity and its grip on power. Especially when it comes to foreign policy, there are other centers of authority in Iran that bemoan the country's growing isolation and favor a more pragmatic course.

That said, even if Iran continues its confrontational ways, the GCC should still seek to take the lead in promoting regional integration, extending commerce and

the habits of cooperation to Iraq. If Iran does ultimately pursue a more moderate course, then the GCC will be poised to provide a cooperative framework for the region as a whole, capitalizing on a Gulf no longer threatened by the hegemonic ambitions of either Iraq or Iran.

Should a reinvigorated GCC lead a cooperative security order in the Gulf, the United States would be able to lighten its load in the region, a necessary step to restore U.S. standing abroad as well as political consensus at home. After Vietnam, the Nixon Doctrine stipulated that the United States would look to local states to carry more of the burden for their own security. After Iraq, a similar doctrine is in the offing. And with Iran still a foe and Iraq in shambles, the GCC provides the logical—if not the only—alternative to U.S. power, even if it admittedly needs to deepen its own institutionalization, collective character, and trust among its members. It has the experience in regional integration as well as the requisite military and economic assets. It is poised to have a strengthened hand in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and in Lebanon and Syria. Its close ties to the United States would ensure considerable U.S. influence over regional developments. Moreover, since such influence would be less overt, flowing through regional intermediaries, it will be more politically palatable—which is particularly important after the damage done to America's image in the Middle East by the Iraq war.

During the Cold War, West European nations took advantage of America's strategic umbrella to integrate with one another, ultimately locking in a stable peace and ending their dependence upon U.S. power. In similar fashion, GCC states should not have to choose between alliance with the United States and regional integration; the two options should work in unison, eventually leading to a Gulf region that no longer needs to rely on the United States as an external protector. ■

No Genocide, No Al Qaeda, No Division of Iraq

Shawn Brimley & Michèle Flournoy

At some point in the next several years, the United States will have withdrawn the preponderance of its military forces from Iraq. As Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad has said, "We have opened the Pandora's box, and the question is, what is the way forward?" Any realistic and prudent U.S.

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